



**A Message
From
The
Secretary**

September has been designated as National Preparedness Month to encourage all Americans to take action to prepare for emergencies including bioterrorism, chemical terrorism, and natural disasters. On September 9, Governor Kathleen Sebelius will host a news conference encouraging Kansas' citizens to be ready for emergencies. The event will also highlight the preparedness efforts in Kansas and the organizations available to assist in an emergency. The event is from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the south steps of the Capitol and will feature organizations and state agencies, including KDHE's Bioterrorism Program, that provide assistance during an emergency. While much help is available during a crisis, we as individuals must also be ready by having our own plan. A good resource for developing a family plan and preparedness kit is available at www.Ready.gov.

Later this month, I will participate in *Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day* and I encourage you to do this as well. This is the second year of the campaign that focuses on improving the health gap between racial and ethnic minorities and the general population. On September 21, individuals are encouraged to take a family member, neighbor, or friend to visit a health care professional, or to take care of themselves by going to see their doctor. As a member of our KDHE family, take this important step for your loved ones and help them make an appointment and get to their health care provider soon.

One way we can all be healthier is by keeping our state's water clean. KDHE is working with citizens, local watershed groups, and other interested organizations and businesses to improve citizen participation in water monitoring. This effort encourages individuals to choose a site, perform a test and submit the information to www.worldwatermonitoringday.org. Last year Kansas was recognized by the America's Clean Water Foundation as the most improved state in citizen participation, going from five registered sites in 2002 to 144 in 2003. This year's goal is 250 sites and we can do it. Kansas can take the lead and be an example to others in this effort.

Our state has already taken the lead with the Kansas Retailers' Meth Watch Program that was recently recognized as a national model for other states and retailers by the Consumer Healthcare Products Association. Also, a member of the State and Local Affairs of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy supports the program as the model for other states to consider as an effective tool for combating meth production. This program encourages retailers to limit the accessibility of products used to make meth and to limit the amount of products on stores shelves, and to provides retailers with information on what suspicious behavior to look for to report to law enforcement. In addition, attendees of a July workshop represented 22 states interested in establishing and implementing their own statewide program similar to ours in Kansas. Congratulations to the efforts of the KDHE staff members who helped make this possible!

One KDHE employee was recently honored for 40 years of service to the State. Bert Zerr started his career with the state in 1964 with the Kansas Highway Commission and later moved to KDHE where he currently works in the Bureau of Environmental Field Services. I want to personally thank Bert for his many years of service, and to thank the many other KDHE employees who have reached milestones of service. Congratulations on a job well done!

Be Well,